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State of mental wellbeing in the ACT

The majority of Canberrans are in good mental health, according to further analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2004-05 National Health Survey (NHS).

Most (88%) ACT residents suffer from low or moderate levels of psychological distress which is similar to the national average. Between the 2001 and 2004-05 NHS there was an increase in the proportion of ACT residents reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress (from 9% in 2001 to 12% in 2004-05).

ACT residents also reported higher levels of long-term mental and behavioural problems than the national average (14% compared with 11% nationally).

Mood problems and anxiety were the most commonly reported conditions by ACT residents (7% and 6% respectively). People aged 24 years and younger had the lowest (10%) occurrences of long-term mental and behavioural problems, while those aged 45 years and over reported the highest at 16%.

Other key findings included:

- People in the ACT who were unemployed were more than twice as likely to report long-term mental and behavioural problems than people who were employed (23% compared with 10%).
- Almost a quarter (24%) of people who reported having long-term mental and behavioural problems were daily smokers.
- Women were more likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress compared with men in the ACT (15% compared with 9%).
- ACT residents aged between 45 and 64 years were the most likely to report anxiety-related problems.

Further details are in **ACT Stats, April 2006** (cat. no. 1344.8.55.001), available free of charge from the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

Media note:
Psychological distress was measured using the Kessler 10 Scale. This is a scale based on 10 questions about negative emotional states in the four weeks prior to interview.

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